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JACK ANDERSON

U.S. Is Seeking A Good Reason To Invade Cuba

Fidel Castro has set off alarm bells inside the White House, the State Department and the Pentagon. He not only has been stirring up revolutions in Central America, but also has ordered his trained terrorists throughout the world to "kill Americans."

This has led to renewed back-room talk of seeking a provocation that would permit the United States to invade Cuba and eject Castro from the hemisphere. The argument has been made that his Soviet friends don't have enough firepower in the Caribbean to protect him and wouldn't risk a nuclear holocaust over Cuba.

For more than two decades, Castro has put up a magnificent bluff on his tropical island.

He has been daring enough to keep the United States off balance and dashing enough to claim revolutionary leadership of the Third World, without crossing the invisible tripwire that would rouse the United States to action.

He has maintained the attitude of one who, fearful of the enemy's over-

whelming, if unmobilized strength, minces forward as far as he can while remaining prepared to retreat at the first sign of counterattack. For all his posturing, he seems aware that he is unloved by most of his Latin American neighbors, that he is far removed from the Soviet sphere and that he is geographically vulnerable to boarding parties from the U.S. fleet.

If he goes ahead with his terrorist attacks on Americans, however, he may finally snag the tripwire. This could be the provocation that would bring a final confrontation with Castro.

It has been argued that the best way to rid the hemisphere of the Marxist threat is to crush the head of the snake, not to stomp on its tail. Better to stop Castro now, hawks contend, than to wait until he has subverted Mexico and transformed that country into a hostile military power on our border.

They say that Castro already is fomenting revolution in southern Mexico. Intelligence reports claim that his agents and agitators are building a rebel movement in the provinces of Campeche, Chiapas, Oaxaca and Tabasco.

But unlike the invasion of Grenada, an assault on Cuba would be no piece of cake. Castro has turned his sunny island into an armed camp,

guarded by 202,000 troops and policed by a 129,000-man security force.

A paramilitary youth army of 100,000 also could be thrown against an invading force.

I have seen secret military maps of Cuba, which show 30 divisions strategically dispersed on the main island and another division entrenched on the Isle of Pines. A crack brigade, identified as the 38th Infantry Frontier Brigade, is deployed around the U.S. naval base at Guantanamo.

According to the secret U.S. count, Cuba is also bristling with 236 Soviet-supplied missiles—158 of them surface-to-air missiles, the rest surface-to-surface. None could threaten the continental United States: they are deployed for coastal defense.

Castro also has a formidable Air Force of 416 planes and helicopters, 194 of them jets. He could scramble 171 jet fighters, for example, including high-performance Soviet MiG21s and MiG23s.

Will the United States repeat the Bay of Pigs but this time, in the words of one Pentagon source, "do it right?" Certainly no invasion is in the offing, and the odds are against it happening. But it is newsworthy that the idea is being seriously debated.